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Endangered Species: Are They Worth Saving?

Endangered species are living organisms that are relatively low in population numbers, many risking extinction. Extinction occurs when a species no longer exists, having a population size of zero. Causes for this occurrence can range from natural selection of a species dying off, a food web becoming unbalanced, to being negatively affected by the impacts of humans. There are a myriad of reasons why extinction happens. When thinking about endangered species or the topic of extinction, many peoples’ first thoughts generally drift towards the tigers and panda bears. These animals, the tigers and panda bears, are notable examples of endangered species, on the population decline in wildlife. However, many other species, plant and animal alike, are also on the brink of extinction. From the small Rio Pescado stubfoot toad in Ecuador to the grand Euphorbia tanaensis tree in Kenya, many life forms have made their mark on the endangered species list (Harvey). Yet, one question remains for all these creatures, should human beings make an effort to save these species from going extinct?

Fiona Harvey wrote that the World’s Conservation Congress met in South Korea this year to compile a list of endangered species called The World’s 100 Most Threatened Species (Harvey). It states the facts and figures, including species name and location, of multiple endangered species in the world. Harvey also states that many species on the list go unnoticed by humans. This is due to the fact that humans are more likely to notice or care about species that benefit or impact their lives in some way. These species are the ones that are usually used for medicinal, cosmetic, food industrial, or other benefiting ways. Humans have taken on a ‘How does it benefit us?’ attitude towards saving endangered species. This has translated to the point where scientists have felt an increasing pressure to argue for the human benefits, (Harvey) that donating to conservation causes can have instead of arguing the point that the creatures deserve a fighting chance because they exist.

However, some observations have shown that stressing the benefits of saving species of plants and animals ironically is contributing to their destruction (Harvey). For instance, medicinal plants being overharvested. In trying to save species and revitalize conservation efforts, it has back fired on the scientists in these cases. Other forms of destruction include the humans destroying the species’ habitats, pollution, and commercializing nature (Harvey). It appears that the existence of human beings in the world has jeopardized the existence of numerous other species.

Although, is that not the way of nature some may ask. Common knowledge tells us that not every living species can survive on Earth for an eternity. For example, dinosaurs, saber tooth lions, and wooly mammoths are not roaming the lands in this day and age. Fossils of extinct organisms have been discovered throughout history, making a timeline of vanishing life forms.

This cycle is completed by the discoveries of new plants and animals. For instance, in 2005 “a total of 20,000 new species, from beetles to dolphins, and from monkeys to birds, [were] expected to be uncovered by zoologists” (McKie and Corbyn). Extinction and new discoveries of species of living organisms in this sense seems like a natural phenomenon. Now humans are expected to donate and help stop this occurrence from happening. Should humans try to mettle in the natural affairs of this world?

Even though there has been a relatively recent rise in species discoveries (McKie and Corbyn) in the world, it is important to stress the conservation of those species that are on the verge of extinction. Manibiot and Chapron express how the government's complacency about biodiversity is matched, so far, by the public's complacency and that the government should be prodded into action.

After the pollution and destruction brought forth to the world by humans, humans should take action in the conservation efforts towards wildlife. Lists of actions have formed, banning negative actions and helping along natural resources. Examples include the banishment of finning sharks at sea, introduce more than small marine nature reserves where fishing is prohibited, (Manibiot and Chapron) amongst other similar actions. Human interaction with the environment such as excessive hunting, waste of resources, pollution, agriculture expansion and contamination, deforestation, and other acts unconsciously brought against other organisms’ ways of life I think should be rectified by the donation of time and money from humans. The negative impacts brought on by humans shows that humans should try to compensate for the damage somehow. For now, money and legislative acts are a start (Scully). These human interactions correlate with the endangerment of species, showing that it is not only a natural process that is bringing the extinction to many species of plants and animals.

In dealing a major hand in the cause of many endangered species and extinction, I think that humans should take an active role in reversing or slowing down the extinction process in a responsible manner. Whether it be taking a stand and talking with their government, or being respectful towards the wildlife surrounding them, humans can play a positive role in the conservation of their fellow living organism that are becoming extinct.

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